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ABSTRACT

A demonstration project designed to improve identification and instruction of adult learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) with learning disabilities is reported. Of 50 students, most older adults, in two ESL classes, 13 students were referred for further assessment and specialized instruction from a learning disabilities specialist. Cultural and language differences and varying levels of education required special attention. These students were assessed for learning style, level of cognitive development, and English language skills (oral and literacy), and were provided with pull-out tutoring from the beginning of the year and team teaching in the regular classroom during the last 2 months. In general, the ESL teachers felt the students had been selected appropriately for intervention and that the tutoring was helpful; concern about the pull-out format was expressed in that teachers felt tutoring should still be done, but as an addition to the regular classroom work. Teachers also expressed approval or disapproval of specific strategies, materials, assessment instruments, and use of translators. Student achievement gains included higher language test scores and improved phonemic awareness, reading skills, calculator skills, and keyboard familiarity. Slight improvement in communication skills was noted. Recommendations for further action are made, and supporting documentation is appended. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ED 382 052

LEARNING DISABILITIES AND THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN THE ADULT ESL POPULATION: A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

DEVELOPED BY
THE
LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION
Minneapolis, Minnesota
July, 1994

FUNDED BY
Minnesota Department of Education
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PROJECT: 353/ ESL Demonstration Project

DATES: July 1, 1993 - June 30, 1994

LOCATION: Lehmann ABE Center

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A. BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE THE MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

The number of adult ESL students with learning disabilities is unknown. As it certainly is perceived as a major problem, it is important that every effort be made to reach this population. Very few studies have been undertaken that try to find ways of determining a learning disability in an ESL population, and even fewer efforts have been made with the Asian community in particular. In an effort to find a way of isolating an ESL adult with a learning disability and then using appropriate techniques to teach English, the Learning Disabilities Association in cooperation with the Lehmann Adult Education Center offered a 1-year demonstration project that would investigate strategies to reach these goals. The major goal of the project has been to explore alternative assessment and teaching techniques, and to determine if their use will benefit the adult ESL learners experiencing learning difficulties.

In a review of the literature, very little information about learning disabilities and the ESL adult learner was found. Studies on bilingual (Spanish/English) elementary and high school students were available, but virtually nothing in the area of multilingual ESL groupings and the effort to distinguish learning disabilities from cultural and English language barriers. There were three objectives for project personnel.

1. LDA and Lehmann Center staff will increase their capacity to respond to cultural differences and special education needs of adult ESL learners. They will be able to incorporate new methods and strategies into future educational programming for their respective learner populations, and serve as a model for other literacy providers.

2. Identify alternative assessment measures that can be used with adult ESL learners to distinguish a learning disability from cultural and language barriers.

3. Approximately 10 learners (identified by the teacher as possibly having a learning disability) out of 40 learners who receive supplemental support in addition to regular classroom instruction, will demonstrate skill gains as compared to past performance and/or skill level at intake.

In order to address these objectives, LDA personnel met with Lehmann ESL teachers to discuss the definition and symptomatology of a learning disability, and how to accurately identify such symptoms through various assessment procedures. A learning disability was defined as a chronic, life-long condition of presumed neurological origin that selectively interferes with the development, integration and/or expression of verbal and/or nonverbal abilities and is present in individuals with average to above-average intelligence who exhibit a significant discrepancy between ability and academic achievement. A learning disability is not primarily the result of vision or hearing loss, physical disability, mental retardation, severe emotional disturbance, traumatic brain injury, or lack of schooling. Using the Minnesota Department of Education's, **Resource Handbook for the Assessment and Identification of LEP Students with Special Educational Needs**, project personnel decided to adapt some of the procedures for a learning aptitude assessment,(such as native language interviews, curriculum-based assessment, test-teach-test model) realizing that most normed tests would not be valid with this multilingual population. It was decided that the ESL teachers would recommend students whose classroom learning pattern fit the general parameters of a learning disability (attached), and that a variety of assessment tools would be implemented to verify the selection. A Level 2 and a Level 3 class were chosen because they were considered to be more stable in terms of attendance, and would guarantee the presence of selected students throughout the project. This proved to be a correct assumption, as all but one student completed the program.

The students in the regular classes represented at least nine language groups and as many cultures. Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, Russian, Chinese, Tibetan languages were some of the languages identified among the fifty students in both classes. Because project staff were just looking for symptoms of a learning disability, however; no particular language group was targeted. From the fifty students in both classes, 13 were identified by the ESL teachers, and referred for further assessment and specialized instruction from the learning disabilities specialist at LDA. Each student would be pulled out of the regular classroom for up to three hours of instruction each week, beginning in October, with team teaching in the regular classroom the final two months of the program.

It was apparent early in the project that cultural as well as language barriers would have to be addressed prior to applying any assessment tools. The students in both classes were, generally, older adults. The Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodian and Laotian students had experienced the war during the 1960's and 1970's, and most had to curtail their formal schooling

and help their families survive. This meant holding a variety of jobs, and in several cases, even fleeing their homes for safety in the mountains. On the other hand, the Russian, and some of the Vietnamese students had progressed much farther in school. Some of the Russians were college-educated, and one was an engineer.

The limited years of schooling in the native country presented some Asian students with a more difficult adjustment to the American classroom and, like American students, they found it hard to accept a learning disability as anything other than a serious character flaw. Attempts to explain the program and the presence of an LD specialist in the classroom was initially very confusing and often threatening. It was necessary at this point to bring interpreters to the school to explain the project and to obtain background information, writing samples and a learning profile in the native languages. The two most prominent language groups represented in both classes appeared to be the Russians and the Vietnamese, so paid interpreters worked with just those individuals. A Hmong education assistant in ESL interviewed in Hmong, Thai and Laotian. A script (attached) explaining the project and the Learning Disabilities Association was prepared by the project director and translated by the interpreters. Of the 13 students referred for special services, many were thought to be Vietnamese. It wasn't until the interpreter completed the short histories of each student, that it was discovered that some of the "Vietnamese" students were actually Chinese, and had moved to Vietnam during the American involvement to open businesses. In fact, English was sometimes the third and even fourth language for some of the students. At this point in the project little could be done to change the makeup of the tutoring groups, so all the students were accepted.

Assessment

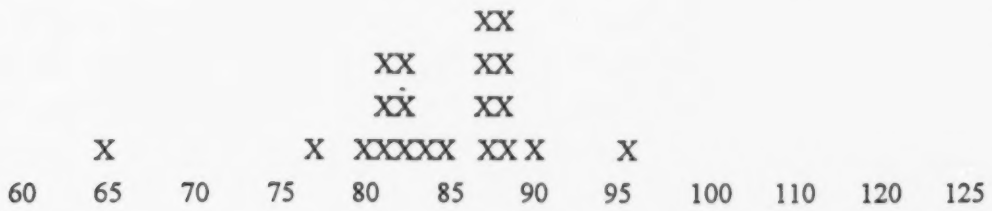
With two classes available, the team decided to use the opportunity to assess each one a little differently to see if certain approaches would provide better information as a basis for the determination of a learning disability. Both classes received a pre and post testing on the **Basic English Skills Test** (BEST) and the **Phonics Inventory**, as well as observations by the teachers and LD specialist. The Level 3 class, however, presented a native writing sample, and were administered the **Learning Styles Inventory** (Sonbuchner, 1991, by permission of New Readers Press), and the **Test of Nonverbal Intelligence - 2** (TONI-2).

	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Level 2	X		X	X	X			
Level 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

The Learning Styles Inventory-LSI (Sonbuchner, 1991) was translated into Vietnamese, because some Chinese students knew enough Vietnamese to understand the questions. Even so, some had difficulty, and had to be reminded to answer the questions as if they were learning in their native language. Listening and speaking dominated the learning styles of the Asian students in Level 3, which helped the LD specialist plan her teaching style to more closely follow the auditory pathway.

The **TONI-2** was selected as a method of determining cognitive development in the Level 3 students, because of its easy nonverbal administration, and the fact that it previously had been used with 21 LEP students. (Lindvig, 1989) The instrument was also recommended in the MDE **Resource Handbook**.... It was felt that there might be a significant discrepancy between the cognitive and any achievement measures obtained, thus giving more information for the determination of a learning disability. In an earlier application, the **TONI-2** only had an internal consistency reliability for Limited English Proficient students of .67. Nevertheless, the test was administered nonverbally to 21 students in the Level 3 class, with results noted below.

DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES FOR LEVEL 3 ESL ADULTS



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The ESL teachers and the LD specialist had doubts about the validity of the test results because the instrument had not been normed on the LEP population. They cited that many of the students, even those with several years of schooling in their native country, had never had exposure to the types of graphic representations used on the test, and that the instructions were not clear to everyone. However, according to the assessment specialists at LDA, the scatter of scores at approximately 1 standard deviation below the mean is similar to the scores tracked for other students in ABE programs for which LDA has conducted assessments. The higher scores, however, were obtained by the European students who appear to be more visual in their learning style than many of the Asian students who appear to process auditorial. Another factor affecting the reliability of the TONI was that several of the students who had taken the test returned to the classroom and shared information with their peers. Even though it was explained that the assessment procedures were used to help each person learn English better, most of the students felt that to perform poorly was a disgrace, and to share their knowledge of the test with others would help them avoid embarrassment. As a result, it was determined that the traditional discrepancy between aptitude and achievement scores for the identification of a learning disability could not be applied to this population.

The native language interviews with the Level 3 class revealed interesting information on educational experiences and cultural differences, and helped the staff understand that a student's behavior in class might reflect unfamiliarity of what might be expected in that environment, rather than symptoms of a learning disability or attentional deficit. There were Hmong students only recently familiar with a written language, farmers who were run off their land in the war, a policeman who was imprisoned and tortured, and those who had never seen a pencil until they were adults.

YEARS OF SCHOOLING IN NATIVE COUNTRY						
0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	Some College	College Graduate
1	4	5	2	3	1	2

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OCCUPATION OR ACTIVITY IN NATIVE COUNTRY								
Policeman	Farm	Vendor	Army	Factory	Help Family	Retail	Professional	?
1	1	1	2	2	5	2	2	2

In this project, students who had more schooling (6+ years) prior to coming to the United States, did not demonstrate more ease at acquiring English (BEST) than their less-schooled peers. They seem to understand what is expected of them, although they seldom question the teacher who they hold in very high regard. There is no evidence from this project that knowing several languages (including French) prior to exposure to English has helped.

The **Basic English Skills Test** was administered between June, 1993 and November, 1993 to all of the students in both classes. Their scores, for the most part, determine placement in the appropriate ESL level. Because the TONI-2 was considered invalid, there was no comparison made between TONI-2 scores and performance on the BEST. This left teacher observation using native and English writing samples (erratic handwriting, omissions, letter reversals), the dependence on other students for answers, remaining in the same ESL level for several instructional periods (usually it takes a student 6 months to move to next level), difficulty following simple instructions, and the presence of several other characteristics listed on the **LD Checklist**, as the best assessment strategies.

One of the assumptions made early in the project was that an intense test-teach-retest method of teaching phonics would be a major help in the acquisition of English, especially if the students had a learning disability. A pre-test in letter-name and letter-sound was given to all of the 13 referred students so the LD specialist could have a starting point for each student. All 13 students from the Level 2 and Level 3 referral groups would be taught using the same multisensory, repetitive phonics-based approach, and then re-tested in the spring to see if there were significant gains. It was expected that the Level 3 students would progress farther because of the increased attention given them in their assessment and instructional procedures, and because they already had a slightly higher knowledge of English. One of the major difficulties encountered in the phonics instruction was the lack of ending consonants in many of the languages. When asked to read *page* , for example, the student would most often say, *(pay/gee)*.

Also, some of the languages are monosyllabic or tonal, presenting additional problems in English instruction.

The pre and post-tests of the **BEST** and the **Phonics Inventory** indicate the greatest gains were recorded for the Level 3 class in all areas, especially in the oral segment of the **BEST** and the phonetic awareness segment of the **Phonics Inventory**.

BASIC ENGLISH SKILLS TEST (ORAL)				
Selected Groups	Average pre-test score	Average post-test score	Average gain/loss	Mean Score*
Level 2	20.2	20.6	+ 0.4	24.3
Level 3	30	36	**+ 6.0**	35.9

* mean score from BEST Test Manual

Project staff believe that the substantial gains made by the Level 3 students are due, in part, to the more comprehensive screening for possible learning disabilities as well as individualized tutoring using multisensory, phonics-based teaching techniques. ESL teachers believed that constant repetition and concentration on phonemic awareness not only helped focus students on how the language was structured, but gave them much needed work on the sounds of English so unfamiliar in the Asian languages.

Only the Level 3 class is routinely given the Literacy section of the BEST. The modest gains in this area may mean that these students needed more work on the whole language approach to supplement their work on phonics. The ESL teachers and some of the students felt very strongly that the "pull-out" approach, although helpful in some ways, interrupted the students' concentration on the use of practical applications of the language. Everyone felt that the two months at the end of the project that brought the selected students back into the general class for team instruction was extremely valuable, and probably should have occurred at the beginning of the term in the fall. This would have increased the "comfort level" for those students who were pulled from the class.

BASIC ENGLISH SKILLS TEST (LITERACY)				
Selected Groups	Average pre-test score	Average post-test score	Average gain/loss	Mean Score*
Level 3	30.6	31.4	+ 0.8	26.9

*mean score from BEST Test Manual

The Level 3 group again made excellent gains, as did Level 2, in phonemic awareness. Less gain was registered for Level 3 in letter names, but they had come into the project with a fundamental understanding of the alphabet. It must be remembered that phonemic awareness includes knowledge of many sounds, including consonant blends, digraphs, and the change in vowel sounds depending on syllabication. (see Phonetic Inventory) Students moved from an understanding of letter sounds, to syllabication and word formation.

PHONICS INVENTORY (LETTER-NAMES)			
Selected Groups	Average pre-test score	Average post-test score	Average gain/loss
Level 2	20.6	23.8	+ 3.2
Level 3	24.3	25.7	+ 1.4

PHONICS INVENTORY - (LETTER-SOUND)			
Selected Groups	Average pre-test score	Average post-test score	Average gain/loss
Level 2	10.8	17.7	+ 6.9
Level 3	14	22.2	**+ 8.2**

The use of computers, which only one of the students had experienced before, helped reinforce the small group and one-to-one instruction in phonics and word construction. Not only did the students work on specialized programs in the LDA computer lab, but many became familiar with the use of the keyboard, and were able to write their own stories. A sample from one of the Level 3 students is attached. The realization that the diminutive man sitting in front of you at the computer keyboard, delighted in what he is producing, was once imprisoned for several years and tortured by electrical shocks to the brain, is humbling. To separate cultural experience from the learning of English is not possible, and probably supports the idea of team teaching students identified with learning disabilities in the regular class. Small group and one-to-one tutoring should supplement the class but not interrupt it.

ESL Teachers' Evaluation of Supplemental Tutoring

At the end of the project, the ESL teachers were asked to evaluate the progress of the students in their classes who were identified as having a learning disability, and were pulled out for specialized tutoring. Some of those comments are listed here.

> " I note significant progress in two areas: written work -her printed words are much more legible and controlled; dictation- she listens more critically and seems to have developed a strategy for remembering and encoding what she has heard."

> " She has made significant progress in oral skills as measured by the BEST. I think that she is gaining confidence in her ability to speak English, and that individual tutoring has fostered that. She is still not excited about being pulled out of the classroom, however."

" His BEST in oral skills showed excellent improvement. Recently Barbara (LDA tutor) noticed irregularities in visual processing. She asked about it, and he said that he had trouble seeing the board and copying." (This may have been the problem, and not a learning disability.)

" I feel that he has made significant progress in the last eight months, and the BEST scores would indicate that. Organization and completion of homework are two areas of improvement."

" Tutoring has not seemed to help in this case. He relies too much on the students sitting near him in the regular class. He does not like being pulled out of class."

" He has made excellent progress in forming letters and in presenting his written work in a more organized form. Specialized tutoring has promoted this." (He never even held a pencil until he was in a refugee camp. He needed help in attending during class- looking at the board, finding the correct page, and following along.)

" Since she has been tutored by Barbara, she is much more organized. Her attention-span has increased. She likes the special attention shown in Barbara's class. More computer work would be helpful."

" Tutoring has helped her with recall, but it is a slow process. The work on the computer has been very helpful, as she is very good at executing a pattern. She seems to have a perseverance problem. Barbara has helped her organize new new material and reinforced her understanding of it. Context is very important for her." (This comment strengthens the idea that a "pull-out" format is not advisable.)

" He likes work on the computer. Individual work and the use of the computer has increased his awareness of the structure of English. Repetition is important for him, so Barbara's tutoring technique has been great."

" I have seen a lot of progress in the last year. The tutoring has really helped, as

did having an interpreter. She is still very dependent on the teacher as an authority figure. 'Pull-out' was not an ideal format for her. Her sound-symbol association is coming along well."

Generally, the ESL teachers felt that students had been selected appropriately, and that the tutoring techniques were very helpful in building symbol-sound relationships, increasing organization skills, and developing self-confidence in the ability to use the new language. The teachers are still concerned with the use of the "pull-out" format, and feel that the tutoring should still be done, but as an addition to the regular classroom work. They enjoyed the team teaching at the end of the project, and everyone thinks that that ought to be a technique used at the beginning of the program. With the development of an LD checklist, teacher observation skills have been enhanced. As the teachers feel that observation is still one of the best methods for identifying a possible learning disability, this additional tool will be very helpful.

Tutoring

Once students were identified as possibly having a learning disability they were scheduled to meet with the LD specialist from LDA twice a week in pairs or one-to-one. The decision for which grouping was used, was arbitrary, and no significant difference was noticed in the improvement of student skills in one grouping over the other. Students were tutored between two and three hours a week depending on their attendance, which was good, but again, not any different than the attendance patterns of the students remaining in the regular class. The tutoring approach employed by the LDA specialist was multisensory, phonics-based, sequential, and used a mastery requirement for advancement to the next skill level. The goal of the tutoring program was to build phonemic awareness in students who were having great difficulty replacing familiar sound symbol relationships from their native language. As was mentioned earlier, several of the students had experiences in several languages prior to English, and for many, it was as difficult just making the tonal adjustment as it was trying to identify the letter(s) that should be associated with those sounds.

The tutor used several techniques to build the language through the use of all three major language processing pathways- kinesthetic, auditory and visual. With students who relied

heavily on auditory processing skills, the kinesthetic approach was most helpful. Salt trays helped students form and feel the letters as they made the sounds, thus reinforcing the sound/symbol relationship. The tutor also used verbal rehearsal, active listening techniques, taped materials, language experience, color-coding and sound packs . The ESL teachers especially liked the use of the salt trays and the sound packs. Both levels improved dramatically on the phonemic awareness section of the phonics inventory. There is a suggestion "...that direct instruction in the phonology of a foreign language may be promising methodology for teaching at-risk foreign language learners, the majority of whom seem to have phonological deficits [in their native language.]" (Sparks, et.al., 1992) Also, " [s]tudents who receive direct instruction in the elements of language may be able to develop more efficient native language skills which may improve their aptitude for learning a foreign language." (Sparks, et.al., 1992)

Spelling was also taught using supplemental devices like the salt tray and white boards for dry-erase pens, and paper-pencil and computer keyboarding were also vital in building good spelling techniques. Although most of the words learned in the ESL classroom are learned by sight or by the whole-word method, it was very important for the students identified as having a learning disability, to understand how to construct words by learning individual sounds and syllabication techniques. Because many individuals with a learning disability, especially in reading, also have a concomitant difficulty with short-term memory, it is vital that they develop another technique for decoding words than a reliance on memorizing each whole word that they will need to know. For an individual relying on auditory processing skills, the memory of whole words is a lot to ask.

ESL teachers want their students to become independent learners, and not to rely so much on bilingual dictionaries or electronic spellers, yet for a visual learner, these tools may be necessary. The more work the tutor did with each student, the more she realized that she had to include pieces of American culture with the teaching of the language. Although the ESL teachers automatically teach this way, specialists working with learning disabilities concentrate on language as an entity, and don't always expand instruction to include cultural influences.

Step by Step, the curriculum published by the Learning Disabilities Association, was used in the early stages of the tutoring project, but many of the words and phrases used as examples were unfamiliar and unnecessary to teach, let alone explain their meaning. ESL

students identified with a learning disability need more basic materials with words consistent to what they are learning in the regular ESL class. For instance, when teaching short and long vowel sounds through syllabication, the **Step by Step** curriculum uses words like *gap, hag, bid, hull, pled and brash.* For an ESL student, words like *fat, slap, fit, fed, and stop,* should be used. For many of the students it isn't just attaching new sounds to a familiar symbol, but actually learning to adopt *new* letters and sounds like *(r), (sh), (th) and (wh).*

Because of the test-teach-retest model and constant repitition used in tutoring the student with a learning disability, there seemed to be a higher level of retention. Also, requiring mastery before new material is introduced keeps the student on focus and allows him to build on a stronger foundation. Like Americans with learning disabilities, the Asian students had to face a lot of "unteaching" before new concepts, sounds and words could be introduced. In the regular classroom, the majority of the class is moving on before the student with a learning disability can grasp the previous material.

The use of the computer with students who have learning disabilities is that the keyboard not only gives them an accurate representation of the letter each time, but allows the student to concentrate on the sound/symbol relationship without having to focus much of his attention on correctly shaping the word. Although the kinesthetic component of handwriting is important for reinforcement, seeing the correct symbol each time, especially for individuals without keen visual processing skills, is important in developing good phonemic awareness. Also some software incorporated the use of headphones, which increased the number of pathways for active learning, and were surprisingly popular with the ESL students.

ESL teacher comments on project

A Questionnaire was distributed to the ESL teachers involved in the study and their responses are presented here.

Do you now know more about LD characteristics and alternative teaching strategies? Please elaborate.

- I learned that LD students need alternative learning strategies that involve multisensory instruction. Forming a letter of the alphabet with a finger in salt or sand was a clever way to activate a person's kinesthetic learning style. Also a tape recording from an exercise reinforced the auditory learner's understanding of the ESL material. Most importantly, I note how much repetition was necessary in overcoming learning blocks.

- The project has been very informative for me in the area of identifying LD characteristics, but less so in alternative teaching strategies. Effective ESL teaching requires the use of many of the strategies employed with LD learners. For example, the use of concrete objects or realia, kinesthetic involvement of the learner, and a combination of visual and oral techniques are all essential in ESL teaching.

Which strategies and materials were most successful? For example, did taping classroom materials work out?

- I didn't feel that I learned enough about strategies and materials to confidently try them in the classroom. It would have been helpful for me to observe Barbara working with the participating students. I am not sure that the materials used by the LD specialist could be used effectively with a large class. The taping of classroom materials that I tried did not work due to inadequate equipment. With the appropriate tools, I think it would be helpful.

- The intensive practice of the sound/symbol system using vowels, consonants, and consonant blends drew attention to a student's weaknesses or misunderstanding of a sound or letter name. This cued Barbara to a need for correction and reinforcement. Her word packs helped students in this area.

Less successful? For example, pulling students out of class.

- Pulling students out of a class period was pretty disorienting for those who were returned in the middle of a class activity. It was less disruptive for those people who left for work immediately after Barbara's session.

- I think pull-out for most students is good, but some resented leaving class. Perhaps they should have been asked their preference. Also more time for Barbara in the classroom prior to the beginning of the pull-out may have eased some of the transitions.

- We also needed more coordination of the materials used in the classroom with those used by the LD specialist. We were just beginning to work this out well during the team teaching period toward the end of the project. More time is needed!

How will you incorporate new strategies and materials in the future?

- An increased awareness of learner differences will make me more sensitive to individual learning styles and needs. I will try to present materials in a more organized, multisensory way. For example, I will use multi-colored chalk to clarify categories for a blackboard presentation. Also, I will use the checklist and watch for the disorganized student as one who might be LD rather than simply displaying a certain personality quirk.

- I will try to work more with the computers. They are a wonderful tool for students who need to work at their own pace. The phonics piece in the tutoring was good, the following strategies were used: open and closed words with folded paper, regular practice with long and short vowels, and lots of work with words in context.

How can this information be shared or modeled for other teachers/programs?

- A videotape of a couple of Barbara's sessions with students would be helpful. Also, a commentary on the reasons why certain strategies were chosen with certain students.

- Modeling for other teachers/programs would be difficult at this point in the project because much of what might be teachable is just now being worked on, i.e., the classroom team teaching. Also, much of the success appears to be based on 1:1 ratio or

- small group learning and there are few if any ESL programs that operate with such numbers. However, teachers could be taught to recognize which learners display LD characteristics. They could then use this knowledge to individualize the presentation of materials. Perhaps they could get a tutor for the learner if an LD specialist is not available.

Which assessment techniques were most valuable?

- The observation done by Barbara, and LD education specialist, and ESL teachers was the most effective assessment.

- In my opinion, the use of a translator and teacher observation were the most valuable assessment techniques. I would have appreciated more time with Barbara in the classroom to verify my observations and to provide training in identifying LD characteristics. Initially, I was very reluctant to "label" a learner LD. I needed information and training to overcome this hesitancy. However, even at this time, I would question my ability to identify with certainty.

Less valuable?

- The intelligence test "TONI" was too culturally bound to be an accurate assessment tool.

- I don't know enough about other techniques to comment.

Was having a translator necessary?

- Although I didn't meet the translators, I had the impression that they didn't get beyond brief personal histories told by the student. A translator who could not evaluate the quality of a student's usage in his /her native language would have been more helpful.

- **Absolutely!** The translator served a number of useful functions: She provided

information on the educational and personal history of the students. She helped the non-participants as well as the participants more fully understand the intent of the project. I think she promoted higher self-esteem among the learners involved because it was flattering to have such interest taken in them, especially when they could really understand what was going on. I would not want to be involved in a process that did not use a translator because I think there might be misinterpretation that could be disrespectful to the participants. I noted that the non-participants who had been given an explanation of Barbara's role in their native language were more accepting of her in the classroom and less questioning of the involved students' competence.

It what ways was it beneficial?

- The translator's explanation to the students of the purpose of the study/project was very important.

Are there any additional learner gains you wish to mention?

- Setting up a tutoring situation with Barbara provided students with the extra attention needed to keep them motivated in learning English.

- The encouragement and support from a native English speaker, other than the classroom teacher, has been most beneficial. Barbara's caring attitude and professional handling of the constantly fluctuating circumstances have promoted learning and growth in the students. Her patience and flexibility put the students at ease. I have previously noted individual learner gains such as increased organizational skills, better handwriting, and more confidence in the classroom setting. I attribute such gains to excellent teaching.

Has this project affected enrollment, retention or attendance?

- Overall Asian students have been steady in attendance. I think the project enabled most of them to focus on learning English as opposed to using class time as a social outlet.

- Some absenteeism continues, usually due to family or work demands.

Participating students comment

Several attempts were made to design a response form for students. The major problems were: 1) explaining what such a form would be used for, 2) finding the appropriate language for the questions and the responses, and 4) probably the most difficult task was getting the Asian students to set aside their exalted view of the teacher, and take the "risk" of saying "no" or making a suggestion. The questionnaire, including some of the responses, is attached.

Student Outcomes

Specific outcomes for tutored students in addition to higher test scores and phonemic awareness noted earlier:

Gains made within reading skill level	93%
Expressed increased communication skills	7%
Performed specific functional task (calculator skills)	86%
Gains made in keyboard familiarity (computer)	79%

B. INCLUDE ONE COPY OF ANY **PRODUCTS** WITH YOUR FINAL REPORT.

(ATTACHED)

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR **FURTHER ACTION:**

Briefly discuss what recommendations you have for sharing information, expertise, or materials concerning your project with other ABE programs around the state. For example: Connections newsletter article, workshop or conference presentations, dissemination of project results or products, etc.

The findings from this brief encounter with ESL students and learning disabilities suggest that more could to be done to develop a more definitive method for the identification of learning disabilities among the adult ESL population. Until such instruments can be normed on, and written in the language of the target population, however, we will have to rely on the techniques used here, and in other studies around the country. Effective assessment instruments will also need to be delivered in the native language, which is a difficult procedure when working with multilingual groups where it is a formidable task to discover the dominant language of students who have lived and worked in several countries. As most programs concentrate on bilingual, often Spanish/English, school-age populations, more research-based efforts also need to take place with adults and other language groups, whether bilingual or multilingual.

It appeared to the staff that using the skilled observation techniques of ESL and LD specialists, an LD checklist, and a writing or oral sample in the native language, the students in the project were identified fairly accurately as having a learning disability, or at least close enough to benefit from the teaching strategies applied. It seemed to us that it wasn't so much the identification of a possible learning disability that was of primary importance in this project, but that being sensitive to cultural differences, a variety of learning styles and different educational needs should be the goal of this and any other study that is making an effort to reach ESL students having difficulty with the acquisition of English. The continued training of ESL and regular ABE teachers to recognize possible symptoms of a learning disability, and to adapt teaching strategies to meet individual needs is vital.

The length of time a student spends at the same level was the first indicator that attention should be directed toward more thorough assessment for a learning disability. Although more scientifically controlled studies toward finding a definitive instrument for the accurate

assessment of a learning disability will be done, it would appear that enough information is available now to tentatively identify students who would benefit from the individualized, multisensory , phonics-based teaching applied in cases where a learning disability is known or even suspected. Early research already shows that teaching phonemic awareness is a key to good language skills in a foreign language, and that as a result of such teaching, better understanding of the native language may be possible as well.

Copies of this report have been requested by the Adult Basic Education Division of the US Department of Education, the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, and the Office of Bilingual Education for the US Department of Education. A workshop/in-service is planned for Lehmann in the spring, 1995, and certainly an article can be prepared for the **Connections** newsletter.

While working with neighborhood organizations in various capacities, the project director was asked what programs were available at LDA for adult ESL students and their children. As a next step in working with ESL students suspected of having a learning disability, it might be a possible, if funding can be secured, to develop an **ESL Family of Readers Program** similar to the **Family of Readers Program** that has been part of LDA programming for several years. The only requirement is that one member of the family, either a school-age child or a parent, must be identified as having a learning disability. LDA is responsible for the testing, arranging the time, providing qualified LD teachers, and even arranging for a meal. The program is usually held in the early evening, includes dinner with all the families, then teaching is done with each group (adults/children), and then everyone is brought back together for a final learning and sharing session at the end of the three-hour class.

A partner (school, community center, etc.) provides the space and is invited to share in securing transportation, child-care for nonparticipating youngsters and other needed services. The program has received superb ratings by independent evaluators, and there is a great need for such a service to the large ESL populations in many of the city neighborhoods, especially in the Phillips Neighborhood in Minneapolis.

Tests, observations, language samples, a discrepancy between ability and achievement, phonemic awareness, learning styles and even medical research studying the symmetry of the hemispheres of the brain have given increased insight into the perplexing problem of learning

disabilities, yet the ability to define such a phenomenon with certainty eludes the experts. If we accept the fact that a learning disability knows no language barrier, however, then it becomes imperative that in order to assess ESL students as accurately as we can, there must be interpreters available for all languages represented in the class. At a time when the field of education appears to be moving away from labeling and toward a more inclusive, mainstreamed classroom, it becomes more difficult for the specialists to identify a student with a learning disability. What the ESL/353 demonstration project has taught us as specialists, is that there needs to be some diagnosis for students who have average to above-average intelligence, yet are not experiencing academic success at a rate commensurate with their ability, yet we may already have enough information to allow us a headstart in planning effective teaching.

The project has also shown the specialists that the student responds better when taught in an environment where he/she feels more comfortable. That environment, overall, was the regular classroom. A team approach using the skills of the ESL teacher and the LD specialist seems to be what the student wants, although individualized work is still required.

ESL 1-YEAR EXPERIMENTAL STUDY WITH METHODS AND MATERIALS TO DETERMINE PRESENCE OF A LEARNING DISABILITY AS AN INHIBITING CONDITION FOR THE NORMAL ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A FUNCTIONAL SECOND LANGUAGE

A review of the literature reveals, so far, no comparable study having been done, nor current study underway that would offer meaningful assistance in our program. Most efforts to determine the need for special services among ESL students has been done primarily at the elementary school level, with some programs in the junior and senior high schools. Contacts have been made with the following individuals for advice, information, and the location of additional services and studies.

James Butcher,	psychologist, University of Minnesota for information on resource center,SARS
Gay Hallberg,	Minneapolis psychologist,LEP Assessments
Margie Robinson,	LD diagnostician, St. Paul
Elizabeth Watkins,	MDE, ESL specialist
Diane Pecoraro,	MDE, ESL specialist
Lionel Blatchley,	St. Paul psychologist, Humbolt HS
Mary Diaz,	Hamline University
Shernaz Garcia,	Associate Professor of Special Education, University of Texas, Austin, TX
Ann Polachek,	Internation Institute
Bob Barron,	psychologist, worked with early prediction of LD- Vietnamese Verbal Aptitude Test (he developed)
Fran Keenan,	National Clearinghouse for ESL-Literacy Education/Center for Applied Linguistics
Mai Dao,	Assistant Professor, Tech. Education & Div. of Special Education & Rehabilitative Services, San Jose Univ., CA

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Name_____

LEARNING STYLES INVENTORY

___1. I like to read when I have free time.

___2. I understand something best when I read it.

___3. I remember what I read better than I remember what I hear.

___4. I would rather read a newspaper than watch the news on TV

___5. I take notes when I read to better understand the material.

___6. I take lecture notes to help me remember the material.

___7. I make few mistakes when I write than when I speak.

___8. I find the best way to keep track of my schedule is to write it down.

___9. I like to listen when people discuss things.

___10. I learn more when I watch the news than when I read about it.

___11. I usually remember what I hear.

___12. I would rather watch a TV show or movie based on a book than read the book itself.

___13. I remember things better when I say them out loud.

___14. I talk to myself when I try to solve problems.

___15. I learn best when I study with other people.

___16. I understand material better when I read it out loud.

___17. I can "see" words in my mind's eye when I need to spell them.

___18. I picture what I read.

___19. I can remember something by "seeing" it in my mind.

___20. I remember peoples faces better than I remember their names.

___21. I like to make models of things.

___22. I learn better by handling objects.

___23. I find it hard to sit still when I study.

___24. I pace and move around a lot when I'm trying to think through a problem.

TÊN HỌ_____

KIỂM ĐIỂM CÁC LỐI HỌC TẬP

____1. TÔI THÍCH ĐỌC KHI TÔI RẢNH RỖI.

____2. KHI TÔI ĐƯỢC ĐỌC MỘT ĐIỀU GÌ, TÔI HIỂU NÓ RÕ NHẤT.

____3. KHI TÔI ĐỌC TÔI NHỚ DỄ HƠN LÀ KHI TÔI NGHE.

____4. TÔI THÍCH ĐỌC TIN TỨC TRÊN BÁO HƠN LÀ XEM TIN TỨC TRÊN T.V.

____5. KHI ĐỌC TÔI THƯỜNG GHI CHÉP ĐỂ DỄ HIỂU VẤN ĐỀ HƠN.

____6. TÔI THƯỜNG GHI CHÉP KHI NGHE THUYẾT TRÌNH ĐỂ GIÚP MÌNH NHỚ VẤN ĐỀ HƠN.

____7. KHI VIẾT TÔI ÍT PHẠM LỖI HƠN LÀ KHI NÓI.

____8. TÔI THẤY CÁI PHƯƠNG THỨC TỐT NHẤT ĐỂ THEO ĐÚNG CHƯƠNG TRÌNH LÀ VIẾT NÓ RA GIẤY.

____9. TÔI THÍCH LẮNG NGHE KHI NGƯỜI TA THẢO LUẬN CÁC VIỆC.

___10. KHI TÔI XEM TIN TỨC TRÊN T.V. TÔI HỌC HỎI ĐƯỢC NHIỀU HƠN LÀ KHI TÔI ĐỌC NÓ.

___11. TÔI THƯỜNG NHỚ NHỮNG ĐIỀU TÔI NGHE ĐƯỢC.

___12. TÔI THÍCH XEM MỘT CHƯƠNG TRÌNH T.V. HOẶC MỘT PHIM ĐIỆN ẢNH DỰA THEO MỘT CUỐN SÁCH HƠN LÀ ĐỌC CUỐN SÁCH ĐÓ.

___13. TÔI DỄ NHỚ CÁC VIỆC HƠN KHI NÓI NÓ RA MIỆNG.

___14. KHI TÔI GIẢI QUYẾT CÁC VẤN ĐỀ, TÔI THƯỜNG TỰ MÌNH NÓI VỚI MÌNH.

___15. TÔI HỌC ĐƯỢC NHIỀU NHẤT KHI TÔI HỌC HỎI CHUNG VỚI NHỮNG NGƯỜI KHÁC.

___16. TÔI HIỂU VẤN ĐỀ NHIỀU HƠN KHI TÔI ĐỌC THÀNH TIẾNG.

___17. KHI TÔI CẦN ĐÁNH VẦN CÁC CHỮ, TÔI CÓ THỂ TƯỞNG TƯỢNG NÓ TRONG ÓC TÔI.

___18. TÔI THƯỜNG HÌNH DUNG CÁC ĐIỀU TÔI ĐỌC.

___19. TÔI CÓ THỂ NHỚ MỘT SỰ KIỆN BẰNG CÁCH TƯỞNG TƯỢNG NÓ TRONG ÓC.

___20. TÔI THƯỜNG NHỚ MẶT NGƯỜI TA DỄ HƠN LÀ NHỚ TÊN HỌ.

___21. TÔI THÍCH LÀM MÔ HÌNH CÁC SỰ VIỆC.

___22. TÔI HỌC ĐƯỢC NHIỀU HƠN BẰNG CÁCH BẮT TAY VÀO VIỆC.

___23. KHI TÔI HỌC, TÔI THẤY KHÓ MÀ NGỒI YÊN MỘT CHỖ.

___24. TÔI THƯỜNG ĐI TỚI ĐI LUI VÀ DI CHUYỂN VÒNG QUANH KHI CỐ GẮNG SUY NGHĨ MỘT VẤN ĐỀ GÌ.

ESL Teacher Checklist to help screen for learning disabilities

__At the same level longterm. Peers are making progress but this student is stuck on a plateau.

__Has difficulty understanding oral instructions and cannot follow them.

__An exceptional number of reversals:

letters-b,p,d

numbers-money and phone numbers

words-was/saw, post/stop

—Inability to cue into a phonics system. Lack of phonetic skills, can't sound out even when the sounds are very familiar.

__Disorganization of papers and notebooks. Doesn't have an organization system. Doesn't recognize when papers come from the same workbook.

__Heavy reliance on a fellow classmate, copies others' work.

__Insecure, won't use language intuition. Doesn't trust own sense of language.

__Not on track, plods along and won't skip ahead to where the class is working.

__Jumbled syntax order. Doesn't understand language pattern. May not have had any childhood school experience to figure out their own language patterns.

__May have problems attending to what teacher is doing. Doesn't pick up cues such as when to look at the example on the board.

__Student chooses to sit in the back of the room or right up front.

__Student may seem very perceptive, savvy, social and humorous but achievement doesn't match.

__Has excellent days with good concentration and achievement contrasted with very poor days.

__Family members have had similar language learning problems.

__Initially motivated, but easily discouraged, attendance dropping off.

__May do very well in auditory exercises but poorly in written work or vice versa. Obvious discrepancy in abilities.

__Sequencing problems:

spelling

word order in sentences

days of the week

recalls events out of order

telling time problems

__Perseverance problems. Carries over items from one task into another.

__Memory deficiencies-may have to look up own address. May have something in short term memory but not transfer it to long term memory.

__Inconsistent, poorly formed or large immature handwriting. Overuse of capital letters even in the middle of a word.

—Family reports that student had difficulties in school even when using native tongue

—Omits words or adds extra words in random, nonsensical ways.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT
EACH STUDENT

Katrina, before asking each student the questions listed here, please explain to them that we are trying to find students who are having a lot of problems learning English, and that we will then give those students special help so that they will learn English better and faster. Tell them that you have made a short tape recording which tells a little about the project and about the Learning Disabilities Association. Please feel free to rephrase the following questions if you need to in order to make them more understandable for the student.

If you will translate their answers as you get them, Barbara will take notes. If you want, we can supply a tape recorder so we can have a record of their comments. It is also important that we have a sample of the students' writing in their native language, so please make sure they understand question #9 below. Thank you.

1. In what part of Vietnam did you live most of your life?

2. Did you go to school? How many years?(what grades?) Why did you stop attending school?

3. If you didn't go to school, tell why? What did you do instead? Did you work on school subjects at home?

4. Did you have any trouble learning in school? What did the teachers say about your school work?

5. What was your best subject in school? Why?

6. Can you speak another language? If so, how did you learn it?

7. Do you have children? How old are they? Do they live with you? Do they attend school? Do they speak English? If they speak English, do they help you by translating important documents or programs on TV?

8. Will you write just a little(in your own language) about why you are attending class at Lehmann?

9. Do you have any questions you would like to ask Barbara about why she is here, or about LDA?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
ABOUT EACH STUDENT

Julia, before asking each student the questions listed here, please explain to them that we are trying to find students who are having lots of problems learning English, and that we will then give those students special help so that they will learn English better and faster. Tell them that you have made a short tape recording which tells a little about the project and about the Learning Disabilities Association. Please feel free to rephrase the following questions if you need to in order to make them more understandable for the student.

If you will translate the answers as you get them, Barbara will take notes. If you want, we can record their answers on a tape recorder. It is also important that we have a sample of the students' writing in their native language, so please make sure that they understand question #8. Thank you.

1. Did you live in the Soviet Union or Russia most of your life? If so, what area? Did you live in another country?

2. Did you go to school? How many years? Why did you stop attending school?

3. If you didn't go to school, tell why? What did you do instead? Did you work on school subjects at home?

4. Did you have any trouble learning in school? If so, what was your most difficult subject? What did your teachers say about your school work?

5. What was your best subject in school? Why?

6. Can you speak another language? If so, how did you learn it?

7. Do you have children? How old are they? Do they live with you? Do they attend school? Do they speak English? If they speak English, do they help you by translating important documents, programs on TV, or your school work?

8. Will you write just a little (in your own language) about why you are attending class at Lehmann Center?

9. Do you have any questions you would like to ask Barbara about why she is here, or about LDA?

Selected responses/comments from ESL student/translator interviews

Selected from notes taken for the ESL students that were identified as LD.

Student 1

English is the 4th language he has learned.

2 years of schooling, poverty.

Was tortured and suffered hearing and vision losses.

Right ear - he hears a sound like KK or ch when he has stress/anxiety.

Caseworker comment: If not literate in own language, then English is hard.

Student 2

Re: native language writing sample, student skips letters, used the word assimilate, a higher level vocabulary word. Translator comment: Bad handwriting, writes confusingly, can't read it easily.

Student 3

In school until 3rd grade.

School was hard, I couldn't concentrate, had to babysit.

Re: native language writing sample, obvious spelling errors, run-on sentences, no connecting words, forgets "marks", which are important. 5 errors in one sentence. Translator comment: Low elementary, 1st grade level.

Student 4

No schooling in Laos, family moved to mountains to get away from soldiers.

Student 5

"It's hard to write in Chinese and Vietnamese."

"I know the answer but not how to spell. I can't concentrate for long or I get a headache/stressed."

Re: native language writing sample: has an extra word - word repeated twice and spelled different each time. Brief sample with many spelling errors. Doesn't use "marks".

These observations by the translator show some mistakes that might be typical of a learning disability.

Student 6

Was mentally tortured, electrical shocks to brain.

Word finding and retrieval problems

"I can't answer a question right away but later I can."

Translator comments regarding writing sample: Sentences use more advanced grammar and vocabulary, more complex thoughts.

Selected from notes taken for ESL students identified as not LD

Student 1 (not all students will be represented)

Re: native language writing sample: more mature writing sample than elementary school students. More advanced vocabulary. No spelling errors. Grammar is fine. Deeper.

Student 2

Grammar is fine. No obvious mistakes.

Student 3

Simple sentences 5-6th grade. Spelling good. Grammar OK. Not deep or flowing.

Student 4

Good punctuation, grammar, spelling.

Student 7

Thought is rich, high level, conventional.

These are questions about Barbara's class. Please take them home. Check OK or Not OK. Or you may write a long answer on the line. Call me if you need help. Work 871-9011. Home 822-2952. Then mail them in the envelope.

	OK	Not OK
-Is it OK to leave Susan's or Ilene's class?		
-How do you feel when you come back to class?		
-Does the work with Barbara help your homework?		
-Is it easier to write now?		
_Is it easier to read now?		
_Is it easier to speak in class?		
-Do you want to study more at home?		
-Does Barbara speak slowly?		
-Are you happy to get special help from Barbara?		
-Do you like to have 2 teachers?		
-Do you ask for help more?		
-Do you like the computers?		
-Do you like having a tape?		
-Do you like the paperwork?		

What do you like best about Barbara's class?

Long answer

Thank you very much. I have learned a lot about helping English students and I will miss you. Please have a wonderful summer.

Barbara Randolph